The New York Flute Club
NEWSLETTER
December 2002

TOMORROW'S CLASSICS:
Recent Flute Pieces With Staying Power

Interviews by Cathy Comrie

EDITOR'S NOTE: Cathy Comrie interviewed Lewis Spratlan, Harold Meltzer, David Macbride, and Harvey Sollberger by telephone in October. She asked them about the origins of the programmed compositions' titles, the influences inspiring their work, and the effect of their experiences as performers on their style as composers. Short biographies of the composers not interviewed—David Froom, Matthew Greenbaum, and Frank Wigglesworth—can be found on page 7.

In Concert

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEW

Sunday, **December 15, 2002**, 5:30 pm
CAMI Hall, 165 West 57th Street

Lewis Spratlan (b. 1940)
Mayflies for soprano and flute quartet (2000)
Lucy Shelton, soprano; Flute Force (Rie Schmidt, Wendy Stern, Patti Monson, Sheryl Henze, flutes)
New York Premiere

Harold Meltzer (b. 1966)
Rumors for solo flute (1999)
Patti Monson, flutes

David Macbride (b. 1951)
Shadow for two baroque flutes (1993)
John Solum, Richard Wyton, flutes

Harvey Sollberger (b. 1938)
To the Spirit Unappeased and Peregrine (1998) for flute and clarinet
Jennifer Grim, flute; Meighan Stoops, clarinet

David Froom (b. 1951)
Duettino for flute and clarinet (2001)
Jennifer Grim, flute; Meighan Stoops, clarinet

Matthew Greenbaum (b. 1950)
Dance Moments for flute and piano (2000)
Judith Pearce, flute and Elizabeth DiFelice, piano

Frank Wigglesworth (1918–1996)
Lake Music for solo flute
Judith Pearce, flute

Program subject to change.

Lewis Spratlan (b. 1940)
Mayflies (2000)

CATHY COMRIE: I read an interview you did with Frank Oteri where he was talking about composers who had nonmusical connections to music, and you said you were very tied into biological processes. Is that why you named your piece "Mayflies"?*

LEWIS SPRATLAN: I wish it were as complicated and interesting a reason as that. In fact it was the title of the title poem in a collection of poems by Richard Wilbur that provided the text for the piece, so I just stayed with it. Coincidentally, it happens to be one of a kind of large number of pieces of mine that have animals, or at least non-human creatures of one sort or another, as their subject. I have a piece called "When Crows Gather," two songs from a song cycle (*Images*) called "Moth" and "Oyster," and a whole separate song cycle called *Wolves*. This is not something that's particularly thematic to me in a

(cont'd on page 10)

*www.newmusicbox.org/first-person/jun00/index.html

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New Poetry and New Music

by Jayn Rosenfeld

From the President

Dear Friends:

Here's a gesture of welcome to New Poetry and New Music—some early holiday cheer for you from *Sailing Alone Around the Room** by Billy Collins, our country's poet laureate. I hope you like these poems, and I hope to see you at our gala holiday concert of musical discoveries on December 15.

Happy Holidays — Jayn

A Gift Denied

[EDITOR'S NOTE:] Jayn Rosenfeld's proffered Billy Collins poems, "Another Reason Why I Don't Keep a Gun in the House" and "Piano Lessons," are destined, for the time being, to be a gift denied. Last minute legal concerns about allowable interpretations of the "fair use" provision of U.S. copyright law (section 107, available to interested readers on pp. 5–6 of www.loc.gov/copyright/circs/circ21.pdf) led us reluctantly to the decision that we should not print these poems without the explicit permission of the publisher. Better to err on the side of caution than to risk the reputation (and treasury!) of the NYFC. So we will make do with synopses and a few excerpted lines.

Another Reason Why I Don't Keep a Gun in the House*†
by Billy Collins

"The neighbors' dog
will not stop barking…"

So begins this Billy Collins poem about a noisome neighborhood dog. The narrator tries to drown out the barking by playing a Beethoven symphony full blast, and then imagines the dog sitting in the oboe section of the orchestra, barking his part as if Beethoven wrote it for him. Unfortunately for the narrator, this version of the Beethoven symphony appears to conclude with an endless coda for solo barking dog.

Piano Lessons*
by Billy Collins

"My teacher lies on the floor
with a bad back…"

In this poem the narrator is a slightly bewildered, motivationally challenged piano student who is learning to play a piece called "It Might As Well Be Spring." Billy Collins's description of the boredom and frustrations of this student and his indifferent teacher may remind many of their childhood piano lessons…or, as is more likely to be the case for NYFC members, provide a glimpse into the minds and lesson-time daydreams of our less attentive flute students.

*Billy Collins, *Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems,* New York: Random House, September 2001

†This and other poems by Billy Collins can be found on the poet's website at www.bigsnap.com.

Member Profile

Susan Deaver

NYFC member since 1972

Employment: Freelance flutist/conductor.

Recent recitals/performances: As a flutist: concerts with the Pierrot Consort at the 2002 C.W. Post Chamber Music Festival at Long Island University (LIU) this summer, and a performance of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 at St. Peter's Church at Citicorp Center, NYC in September. As a music director/conductor: Brahms' *Academic Festival Overture*, Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* with the SUNY Stony Brook University Orchestra (on Nov. 12, 2002), and a program of orchestral music influenced by Japan and China with the C.W. Post Orchestra at LIU (on December 9, 2002).

Career highlight(s): A 1972 fellowship to Tanglewood where she performed in the Fellowship Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein (Mahler Symphony No. 9) and Seiji Ozawa (Mahler Symphony No. 1); being principal flute of the Washington Chamber Symphony at the Kennedy Center in Washington, from 1981 until the organization's demise in 2002; tours to Europe in the 1980s with the Manhattan Woodwind Quintet and the Washington Chamber Symphony; substitute flutist/piccoloist on Broadway since 1990 at *Phantom of the Opera*.

Current flute: Gold-plated Muramatsu (c. 1978) and Haynes wood piccolo (c. 1973).

Influential flute teachers: Eugene Foster, 1970-1972; Julius Baker masterclasses, both as a participant and as an assistant (in 1984); Harold Bennett at the Manhattan School of Music (MSM), 1972-1975; Harvey Sollberger at the MSM, 1972-1975 (contemporary music); Thomas Nyfenger, masterclasses and individual study, 1975-1982; Ransom Wilson at MSM, 1988-1990.

High school: Cheyenne Central High School in Cheyenne, Wyoming (class of 1969).

Degrees: B.M. (1975), M.M. (1976) in flute performance from MSM; D.M.A. (1994) from MSM with a doctoral thesis entitled "The Group for Contemporary Music from 1962 to 1992."

Notable and/or personally satisfying accomplishment(s): (i) Her combined careers as a freelance performer (as a conductor and flutist) and teacher (as a faculty member of C.W. Post/LIU, SUNY Stony Brook and MSM Preparatory Division); (ii) the successes of her former students, some of whom have continued their studies at MSM and Eastman School of Music and gone on to professional music careers, and others who have continued to keep music as an important part of their lives though not pursuing music professionally; (iii) being a musician in NYC working with so many wonderful colleagues and students.

Favorite practice routines: Moyse tone studies, Taffanel and Gaubert *17 Daily Studies* and a balance of etudes, orchestral excerpts and preparation of repertoire for upcoming freelance orchestral and chamber music performances.

Hobbies: Taking care of her champion border terriers, Jasper and Lindy; maintaining her website (www.susandeaver.com).

Advice for NYFC members:
Be actively involved as much as possible in music. Embrace opportunities to perform and study as many types of music as possible—solo, chamber and orchestral. Broaden your musical horizons by going beyond the printed flute solo and know the whole piece, whether it be for flute and piano or a flute part within a chamber or orchestral piece. ❑

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

DECEMBER '02

DEC 15 Sunday 2:30 pm

The Sonata Trio with Tamara Freeman, violin, **Nancy Horowitz**, flute, and Noriko Kubo, piano, will be playing seasonal works and trio sonatas by Quantz and Stamitz.

• Emmanuel Baptist Church, 14 Hope Street (at E. Ridgewood Ave), Ridgewood, NJ • Admission is free • Info, call 201-444-7300 or email Nancy at nancyhorowitz@yahoo.com.

JANUARY '03

JAN 4 Saturday 8:00 pm

Zara Lawler, flute, will perform works by Roussel, Liebermann, Meltzer, Corigliano, and Copland in a St. Paul's Festival of the Arts recital with Colette Valentine, piano, and Mary Ellen Callahan, soprano.

• St. Paul's Methodist Church, So. Broadway and Division Avenue, Nyack, NY • Admission $6 • Info, 845-352-1795.

JAN 12 Sunday 8:30 pm

Michael Parloff will perform works by Martinu, Spohr/Mozart, Debussy, Beethoven, Takemitsu, and Jolivet in a recital with guest artists Mariko Anraku, harp; Ken Noda, piano; Nick Eanet and Juliette Kang, violins; Cynthia Phelps, viola; and Jerry Grossman, cello.

• Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, 154 West 57th Street (at 7th Avenue), NYC • Admission $35 through CarnegieCharge (212-247-7800) or online (www.carnegiehall.org); $15 students/senior tickets available at the Carnegie Hall box office • Info, contact MidAmerica Productions at 212-239-4699 or www.midamerica-music.com.

Flute Happenings Deadlines

Issue	*Deadline*	*Mail date*
January 2003	12/12/02	12/28/02
February 2003	01/16/03	02/08/03
March 2003	02/20/03	03/15/03
April 2003	03/20/03	04/12/03
May 2003	04/03/03	04/26/03

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Members may advertise in this section for $10 for up to 320 characters/spaces. Your ad should be submitted by hard copy or email. Name and phone number are required. Deadline is the same as for Flute Happenings submissions. Ads must be paid for in advance. Make checks payable to the New York Flute Club *and mail to the Newsletter Editor.*

How the December Program Was Chosen

by Patricia Spencer

The December program has been organized with the idea of presenting some recent works that flutists "in the know" consider to be good candidates to become classics in the repertoire. Naturally we know we are putting ourselves in the line of fire by doing this—we are sure that each of you will have a special favorite, alas, undiscovered by our selection process! If indeed this is the case, we invite you to tell us about it, and we will add it to the list for future consideration.

The procedure we used was to email approximately 20–25 flutists who play a lot of new music, and invite nominations from them of pieces written in the past 20 years that they thought were likely to become "classics." Nominations were also invited from all board members. The committee which met to narrow the list down to the final program choices was comprised of Jayn Rosenfeld and myself, with Rie Schmidt and Kathy Fink as invaluable telephone consultants.

It would of course be impossible to adequately represent all the excellent pieces written for our instrument in the past 20 years. We are truly living in a period of wondrous blossoming of flute repertoire. If in coming decades we can continue inspiring composers as we have in the past few decades, the flute will have a repertoire comparable to that of the violin, or piano, or voice, for this era. This can certainly not be said of earlier periods—think of our frustration at having no Mozart sonatas except those written when he was so very young, or of how wonderful it would be if we had a big Stravinsky duo for flute/piano or several solo pieces by Bartok!

The richness of choices from the past two decades made our selection process easier: there was no possibility of trying to be inclusive or even representative. The only possible goal would therefore be to select a combination of pieces that interacted well with each other, using contrasts of style, instrumentation, and mood, to build a program with a sense of excitement. This is what we have tried to do, and we hope you enjoy it!

A list of all works nominated for this program, plus information about publishers, will be available at the concert on December 15. ❑

Harold Meltzer (b. 1966)
Rumors (1999)

CATHY COMRIE: Why did you title the piece Rumors*?*
HAROLD MELTZER: It is, among many other things, an homage to one of my composition teachers from when I was in graduate school, Martin Bresnick. Martin wrote a piece for Robert Dick about 25 years ago called *Conspiracies*. And *Conspiracies* is a play on words in several different ways. It sounds ominous, and yet it is derived from the Latin *conspirare*, to breathe together. It's a multiple flute piece, and it's a pun on the idea that several flutists would be breathing together at once, or one live player and several prerecorded flutists would be.

So *Rumors* similarly comes from a Latin and Italian derivative, *rumorese*. Rumorese in Italian are noises, yet it sounds much more ominous, just like conspiracies. [As for] the noises involved, I use a variety of extended techniques which are at some intersection between music and noise in each one of the four pieces of the set.

NYFC Flute Fair 2003

SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2003
9:00 am–7:00 pm
Union Theological Seminary
100 Claremont Avenue
(between 120th and 122nd Streets/ Broadway and Riverside Drive)

Masterclass: The Flute Fair will feature flutist Robert Aitken and composer Henry Brant. Aitken will host a masterclass and perform Brant's new composition, *Ghosts and Gargoyles*. Those interested in participating in the masterclass should send resume and tape or CD no later than Jan. 31 to:

Katherine Fink; 61 Ridge Road;
Valley Cottage, NY 10989

Student Flute Ensembles:
The Fair will also feature student flute ensembles. Those interested in performing should contact Stefani Starin at starin@newband.org by Jan. 15.

Exhibits: Inquiries regarding exhibits will be answered by Exhibits Coordinator Rebecca Quigley at:

rebeccah1@yahoo.com.

Please check the NYFC website —www.nyfluteclub.org— for details and updates.

Katherine Fink, *Flute Fair Chair*
(finkkath@optonline.net)

NYFC ANNUAL COMPETITION

The winners will receive monetary awards and a performance at the Competition Winners' Recital at CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th Street, on Sunday, April 27, 2003.

Application Deadline:
FEBRUARY 21, 2003.

For details and application, see NYFC website (www.nyfluteclub.org).

Required piece: Sonata by Paul Hindemith, first movement only, to be played from memory, plus all movements of another piece of your choice. It is not required to play the piece of your choice from memory.

Competition Coordinator:
Patricia Zuber
152 West St.; Closter, NJ 07624
zuberflute@earthlink.net

CC: I've heard two movements, "Trapset" and "The Heaven of Animals," from Patti Monson's recording. You wrote these for Patti, didn't you?
HM: I wrote all four of the pieces for her.

CC: What are the other two?
HM: They are "Bel Canto" for bass flute, which is the last in the set, and also a very short piccolo piece called "Focus Group."

CC: How would you describe the compositional style of Rumors*?*
HM: What unifies the four pieces aesthetically is that I started each one with the idea of the techniques involved. Then I tried to hear what notes, what combinations of melodic runs or harmonies (vertical sonorities) would sound good within the confines of any given technique. Sometimes the answer would be microtonal, or sometimes it would be tonal, or non-tonal.

So I let the techniques guide me aesthetically and I made choices within that, but they are stylistically diverse in a way. The common principal is that they are guided by the technical features of the instrument.

CC: I've read that outside of being artistic director of and composing for the group Sequitur, you have written theater music for Off Broadway, Shakespeare and Company, and Syracuse Stage. Do you have a theatrical aspect to your music?
HM: Yes and no. I mean all music really should be dramatic or it's in real trouble anyway. But one of the things that motivated me to find these techniques in the first place was theatrical.

I'm always looking for ways to underscore music in the theater, for ways to write real music that has textures that are diaphanous and transparent, so that it can go on at the same time as dialogue without interfering with it. Music in which the sound comes and goes. Then you can follow what's going on on the stage and at the same time follow what's going on in the music.

And sometimes that leads you to find ways of producing sounds that don't last, like the percussive sounds of "Trapset," or ways to continue multiple throughlines at once, where each line comes and goes and has a sound that is in question and unpredictable like in "Bel Canto" for bass flute. Or in the piccolo piece, "Focus Group," where at times the music retreats into whispers and buzzes and then comes back into full throated flute sounds.

CC: I'll also be talking to Lewis Spratlan, with whom you studied. Was he one of your mentors?
HM: Well Lew certainly is one of them; he was my undergraduate teacher. And I spoke with him on the phone yesterday and I saw him three weeks ago, so I'd have to say he was one of my mentors. So were both of my graduate school teachers at Yale, Martin Bresnick and Jacob Druckman. Tobias Picker, Jonathan Kramer, and I had some other teachers….

CC: So what are your compositional inspirations, musical or nonmusical? What gives you ideas?
HM: Most of my inspirations are very specifically musical.

CC: Are you thinking in terms of the person you are writing it for?
HM: Very clearly. I [typically] work very closely with [the performer] in coming up with the music.

The pieces [in *Rumors*] are so "out there" that I would not have tried to do them unless I had Patti as a willing partner in experimentation. I feel the same connection with the individual performers in a piece I've been writing for cello and in another one I'm writing now for guitar. When I work with the performers from my group Sequitur, it's really easy because I know them—not only the musical abilities, but the personalities.

CC: It's a very theatrical group, isn't it?
HM: We are committed to doing mixed media work. Some take to it perhaps better than others, but by now we're pretty much primed to play almost any kind of media presentation.

CC: Do you perform yourself?
HM: I try not to. I haven't always escaped it. I have played piano in public probably three or four times in the last five or six years. I used to be a bassoon player. ❑

Recordings: *CRI*
Music: *www.sequitur.org*

David Macbride (b. 1951)
Shadow (1993)

CATHY COMRIE: I spoke with John Solum (who commissioned Shadow*) before talking to you, and he said that though* Shadow *was written for two baroque flutes, he thought the piece was not at all influenced by the Baroque style. And he mentioned that he had gone to you even before you had started composing* [Shadow] *and played abstract sounds on the Baroque flute for you to hear...*
DAVID MACBRIDE: It was that session for *Shadow* with John and Richard [Wyton] that got me thinking about making different timbres the focus of the piece. Unlike the modern flute, Baroque flutes seem to have a different color for each note—depending on what key you are playing in. To play flat notes in tune, you have to change your embouchure, which [changes] the timbre. So throughout the piece the flutes play in different keys to exploit the difference in color.

In general, I'm very interested in color; it's part of the language we have today. So when John asked me to write this piece, I wanted to know more about the instruments themselves. [Now I think the piece] works better on two Baroque flutes than it would on two regular flutes.

CC: John had sent me your CD of the Duos, and it was interesting to listen to the other pieces and hear your use of canons, unisons and things like that. How would you describe your general compositional style?
DM: I use traditional techniques, which you mentioned—canons and various imitations. I used canons to get two very equal parts; it's really not a first and second part that are primary and subordinate. In other compositions there may not be canons, but I'm always thinking in twos. I think it's about the highest number I can deal with. [Higher than that], relationships get complicated; talking gets complicated. Life forces seem to exist as opposites, so I generally think [in terms of] opposing pairs, opposing forces, opposing ideas. The counterpoint can be one of ideas and lines, or one of totally different ensembles, of noises versus

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MACBRIDE (cont'd from previous page)

more traditional sounds, or of many different elements. So I'm interested in those pairings in general. *Shadow* seemed to lend itself to that.

CC: Tell me about the title…
DM: The title was taken from the name of the artists' colony where I wrote the piece—Yaddo, in Saratoga Springs, NY. Yaddo was apparently from the daughter of the founder of the colony—her word "yaddo" meant "shadow." And so that's why it's titled *Shadow*. Something about the play of light on water and also the concept of the Shadow. It turns out that that family had some rather dark occurrences in its life too, so there's that element of Shadow as well.

CC: John also told me that you wrote an ensemble piece called Yaddo *for 16 flutes. What is that piece like?*
DM: Actually he helped put on the premiere with the New York Flute Club [in December 1984]. I wrote the piece in 1983. I was just sitting in my cabin there at Yaddo thinking about the sound of all these flutists playing in a semicircle. Again I got into shadow-type patterns and imitation, and moving the sound of the flute across the ensemble so there was a sort of stereophonic effect. At one point, they all go up to a very high D, which was sort of risky, almost suicidal.

CC: Absolutely. Pitch-wise.
DM: Pitch-wise, and whether or not they'd hit it. Very much shot in the dark, a leap of faith. But it actually worked out quite well. There's a lot of energy there; they hit this note and then they come down from it. I was very pleased.

I'd like to say that I'm so indebted to John Solum for not only all his support of my music, but his interest in commissioning new composers. As many people know, he's best known for his work in early music, and particularly Baroque flutes and running the Connecticut Early Music Festival for many years with Igor Kipnis, but he's always seen a connection between the older instruments and new music. He's commissioned many composers—Jack Beeson, Otto Luening… teachers I had at Columbia University….

CC: Were they your mentors?
DM: Otto Luening was professor emeritus by the time I got there, so I didn't [formally] study with him. But he was very much a part of the Columbia University scene, [even] in his 80s. I would see him walking on Broadway on the West Side and I'd always chat with him. One day I visited him at his beautiful apartment on Riverside Drive. He invites me in and says, "I'm not sure quite why you want to see me." And I said, "Well I just thought maybe I could get your advice, you've had so much experience about all sorts of things." And his reply was, "In the night sky, look up. Find your star and follow it."

CC: That's amazing.
DM: Yeah, and I've always remembered that. It was very practical. And I always remember his name starts L-u-e-n-i-n-g, which is right before Macbride, and usually there wouldn't be any other names right after Luening, so if I'd see a directory I'd look at my bio, which was printed much like everybody else's—blah, blah, blah, blah. His was "Started writing in 1905, still doing it." [Laughs.] I thought that was very telling. He also said that competitions were for horses, not composers.

CC: Do you have any compositional inspirations, musical or nonmusical?
DM: Oh, all the time. Observing nature, observing people, observing anything and everything. I think that's what composers do, they observe with their ears, but they also observe with all their senses.

I've certainly listened to composers of many traditions and also music of many traditions. I am Eurasian. My mother was born in China and my dad was born in the United States. I've always felt that my music, including *Shadow*, was influenced by Eastern thought and music. It's not literally Chinese-sounding, if there is such a thing, but I think it is a kind of a hybrid of Western practices and instruments with an Eastern approach in terms of color and timelessness.

John Cage really opened the door for all of us…. I'm very enamored of many jazz artists from keyboard pianist composer Bill Evans to Miles Davis to Coltrane, to Ellington to Mingus. These are great creators. I've been influenced by popular music that I grew up with, [like] The Beatles, Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead, all that sort of thing. As a kid, I was a big Who fan for many, many years. I lived in Berkeley, California [then] and all these bands would come in with all that energy. [You'd be] taking a classical piano lesson, but at the same time [you knew that] this was the music that really mattered. And I think [these influences] have manifested themselves in my music, not literally as rock music, but in the directness and energy [of my approach]. Rather than trying to write in all these styles, I've tried to incorporate some of these sensibilities…into what I do. ❑

Recordings: *Nova Recordings; Albany Records; various compilations*
Music: *www.dlmacbride.com*

Harvey Sollberger (b. 1938)
To the Spirit Unappeased and Peregrine (1998)

CATHY COMRIE: What is the significance of the title "To the Spirit Unappeased and Peregrine"?
HARVEY SOLLBERGER: It comes from T.S. Eliot's extended poem *Four Quartets*. And there's kind of a tie-in with the dedication of the piece, because the work was written for a concert in honor of the 60th birthday of Charles Wuorinen, one of my oldest friends and musical collaborators, going back to those fabled 1960s. He had been extolling the *Four Quartets* one of the last times I'd seen him, so I just thought I'd take a look. It was a very ripe hunting ground for titles. I found several likely candidates and finally narrowed it down to that—which is, I think, a reference not too oblique to the dedicatee.

CC: Many of your works do have literary references. Is this deliberate?
HS: Not in any sort of planned or conscious way. But I do read a lot and really appreciate words, so you're right, a lot of my titles have been drawn from things. In the case of *To the Spirit* I just went looking in a particular place and found something that I thought was really appropriate.

In other cases, it works the opposite way—I remember something I've read, recently or long before. I wrote a piece for cello and two percussionists called *The Two and the One*, which is the name of a book by Mircea Eliade, the University of Chicago historian of religion. That piece really grew out of the title, in a way. Very opposite from *To the Spirit*, where the title came wagging along after the piece.

CC: What you don't see when you hear To the Spirit *is that every measure is in a different tempo—over a dozen, for sure. What made you decide to do that?*
HS: I think because there was some sort of mathematical ratio between the tempi which in some way related to the intervalic relations of the piece.

CC: Is it serial?
HS: I would call it a permutational piece. I think twelve-tone music is a very specific set of music that uses or employs a very specific set of procedures. But there's a whole range of chromatic music using all twelve tones of the chromatic scale, or sometimes less, or sometimes more that uses procedures akin to what twelve-tone music does but perhaps in an expanded way. My own name for that is permutational because it, just as twelve-tone music does, uses permutations of sets—that's going on here too. But the permutation may extend to things like tempi and tempo relations. It's still something different from the total or integral serialism of the 1950s where that was first explored.

The different tempi were kind of an experiment because I'd never written or seen anything like that. I was intrigued by the idea of a kind of continuity that was based on the sort of quantum leaps—that there'd be a certain beat at one tempo and then the music would just by a kind of quantum leap with no time in between, be in another tempo.

This grows out of my being a performer. To me the idea of sort of shifting from one level of time passing to another is a very distinct feeling that one has performing. So I really came to this not out of some abstract kind of business of pushing numbers around, but I came to it from a kind of feeling that these tempo

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More Composers on the December Program

David Froom (b. 1951)
Duettino (2001)

David Froom was born in California in 1951. He was educated at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Southern California, and Columbia University. His main composition teachers were Chou Wen-chung, Mario Davidovsky, Alexander Goehr, and William Kraft. His musical compositions—including works for large ensembles, chamber groups, voice, and solo instrumentalists—have been performed throughout the United States and Europe. His music is available on CD on the Delos, Arabesque, Centaur, and Sonora labels, and much of it is published by MMB Music, Inc.

Mr. Froom has received many awards, grants, and fellowships, including commissions from the Fromm and Koussevitzky Foundations, a Fulbright grant for study at Cambridge University, and fellowships to the Tanglewood Music Festival and the MacDowell Colony. He serves on the National Advisory Board for the League of Composers/ISCM and on the board of directors for the New York New Music Ensemble. He is a professor of music at St. Mary's College of Maryland, where he has taught since 1989. A works list and audio samplings of his music are available at www.smcm.edu/~dfroom/. ❑

Matthew Greenbaum (b. 1950)
Dance Moments for flute and piano (2000)

Matthew Greenbaum was born on Manhattan's Lower East Side. While still in his teens, he began private studies with Stefan Wolpe, whose influence remains indelibly etched in the younger composer's works. After Wolpe's death, Greenbaum continued his studies with Mario Davidovsky and subsequently received a Ph.D. from the CUNY Graduate Center.

The composer's works have been praised for their "subtle grafting of an almost Cubist sense of counterpoint onto a natural lyricism." Much of Greenbaum's recent music takes New York City as a subject, with the intention of capturing its particular combination of errant nostalgia, surrealism and rapid urban rhythm. These works include *on the river the shadowy group* for baritone saxophone and piano, *Into the Clefts of Streets* for clarinet, cello, piano and marimba (written for the New York New Music Ensemble), and *East River* for violin and piano. *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*, a monodrama for baritone and six instruments, was commissioned by the Fromm Foundation and premiered in February '98 by Parnassus with New York City Opera baritone, Victor Ledbetter.

Greenbaum is currently on the composition faculty at Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music. He has been the recipient of numerous awards, including grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and has received commissions from the Meet the Composer/Readers Digest Commissioning Program, Parnassus, Network for New Music. Additional biographical information can be found at www.networkfornewmusic.org/greenbaum.html. ❑

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(MORE COMPOSERS, cont'd from previous page)

Frank Wigglesworth (1918–1996)
Lake Music for solo flute

Frank Wigglesworth began writing music when he was eleven, and has composed in virtually all genres. His output includes three symphonies as well as numerous concertinos and works for string orchestra—most notably *Summer Scenes*, for flute, oboe and string orchestra (1951); the striking *Three Portraits* of 1970 (the third movement of which is an Adagio in Memory of Henry Cowell); and *Sea Winds* of 1984 (his only twelve-tone work). He wrote virtuoso solo instrumental works—for instance, *Wind Shadows*, for flute (1983), as well as much chamber music, song cycles and a one-act opera—the atonal and rhythmically complex *The Willowdale Handcar* (1969), based on the book by Edward Gorey. He wrote sacred and secular choral music—masses and anthems, as well as *Police Log of the Ipswich Chronicle* (1986), based on clippings from the *Chronicle*, illustrated by twelve original ink and watercolor drawings by Anne Parker Wigglesworth. And he wrote incidental music for theater—*Between the Atoms and the Stars* (1959) and *Hamlet* (1960), as well as ballet—the acclaimed *Young Goodman Brown* (1951) and *Ballet for Esther Brooks* (1961). His music is published by the American Composers Alliance and Merion Music of Theodore Presser.

He was a performer (violinist, violist, and choral conductor), teacher and administrator, most notably at the New School for Social Research, where he was chairman of the music department for more than 20 years. Wigglesworth was a composer, but his role as a tireless champion of new music cannot be overemphasized. He was an advocate for young composers, beginning with his work as editor of New Music Edition and New Music Recordings, and as an organizer of New Music Concerts. He was also an influential board member of such organizations as Composers Recordings, Inc. (CRI), the American Composers Alliance (ACA), Composers Forum, Inc., among many others. For more than 30 years he lived on Downing Street in Greenwich Village, where he and his wife, the artist Anne Parker, raised their two children. ❑

SOLLBERGER (cont'd from previous page)

contrasts produce certain physical and sensory changes in me as a performer projecting myself into the role of player, which I thought would maybe result almost in a kind of Cubist continuity. Cubist painting is representational, but it sort of shows you on one pictorial plane, elements that are taken from the same subject may be shown from different angles. So the nose will be seen from a 90 degree side angle and the eye will be seen from the front and these are all sort of juxtaposed together. I was thinking of almost a kind of musical Cubism where it would indeed be a continuity, but it would be a continuity of a very fractured, oblique sort. Again this didn't just grow out of [an interest in] abstraction, but out of a sense I had of what the physicality of this would feel like.

CC: It actually doesn't sound disjunct.
HS: It doesn't.

CC: And one would think it would.
HS: You could make the fact that there were different tempi more apparent just by perhaps emphasizing the notes on the beat, so there'd be a stronger sense of the pulse. But this is not really something that is apparent to the listener, nor need it be. In a way I'm almost working on the performer—as if the performer is my instrument and he or she is acting on his or her own instrument.

The piece too, has 60 measures in it and that's a very conscious allusion to the fact that it was Charles's 60th birthday that was being celebrated. That was a kind of premise right at the beginning, and then that there was some sort of overall proportional relation between the length of the measures. I did toy with the idea of perhaps having each measure reflect that year of his life, like measure 9 would be Charles at 9. Then I gave up because I realized I didn't know that much about him [laughs].

CC: The early years, especially.
HS: Yes. Besides there might be things revealed that he wouldn't want revealed [laughs]. So I just left it more abstract. But that would be an interesting kind of piece to write. Maybe I could write something like that about myself… "Confessions in Music"….

CC: Hearing you talking about your playing brings up one of my other questions: has the tremendous amount of flute playing, conducting or teaching you have done had any impact on what or how you compose?
HS: Yes, all the time. And I can't imagine that I'd be the same composer if I didn't have one foot and usually one-and-nine-tenths feet embedded in performance. Very much from the beginning, everything I wrote sort of grew out of the physicality of performing. I can't cut myself loose from that, and I don't want to. As an exercise it might be interesting to write a piece that would just be a kind of abstract pattern piece. And I do like such pieces. They offer a different kind of space into which you invest your performing persona and they offer different things to discover. But basically, I'm attracted to music that is sort of physical and gestural.

Those of us who are performers have an odd job sometimes. We get paid for getting up in front of people and displaying our emotions. It's [even] socially acceptable. I think a lot of very good performers might get very tied up in knots

at the thought of having to give a speech in public, yet they'll get up and play their instruments and reveal everything about themselves because it's something they've focused on….

I should say that the piece that I've just finished, which is for solo clarinet, carries the idea of *To the Spirit* a little further. There are only three tempi, so in that sense it's a little simpler. Still every measure is in a different tempo from the one that preceded it. In this case, each of the three tempi is associated with a particular kind of emotional or affective or gestural kind of character. Within each character type there is a lot of range; these characters are not one-dimensional.

And again, there is an experimental side to this: I'm writing what I call "an essay before a passacaglia," because this piece is a passacaglia. And so much contemporary composition becomes sort of, from my point of view, trivialized, ups and downs of trying to connect up to things I think are not particularly interesting, pop music and so forth, I get more and more conservative.

So I've just written my first passacaglia. It's a set of variations on a theme of Anton Webern's—how retrograde and square can you get? Somebody would really have to work hard to go further than that. And that's actually a piece that's based on triads. Each of the passacaglia notes generates a triad. The kind of triad and the inversion of the triad that occurs is based on the tempo and the number of beats in the bar, so there is a constant relation between those things. And yet there are certain kinds of free floating notes that inflect the triads so it doesn't come out sounding like Bach or Samuel Barber. I don't know, it comes out sounding like my music, but underneath it it sort of tickles me that there are these kind of triads. And sometimes all kinds of triads; major, minor, diminished, augmented and even some 7th, 9th, and 11th and 13th chords.

CC: One thing that I have always found about your music is that it seems like you do not have one style. A lot of your pieces sound so different from each other. What influences do you have in composing?

HS: I sometimes jokingly say this is my inconstant character that I can't decide on who I want to be so I keep trying other things.

CC: Are you influenced by other composers of this time, or do you have mentors that you recall from back when you were in school?

HS: Both I think. Certainly some composers who influenced me when I was young, [they] sort of hang around. I almost feel them looking over my shoulder. Nothing quite as spooky….

CC: Who were they?

HS: Primarily Stefan Wolpe and [Edgard] Varèse. And it's no coincidence that both were people I knew when I first moved to New York. It was one of the most challenging and exciting times of my life in terms of all the changes and new influences—a sense of unbounded possibility. Wolpe was in his 60s and Varèse was already in his 80s, I think. Neither one was the Michael Jackson of contemporary music or anything, but they were people of integrity, people to model yourself on. To me, as a young man, as a young composer, the fact that they had come through life and worked for so many years and maintained their ideals and their integrity, was encouraging and an example.

And then there are many other composers, many of whom are working today. I feel in various ways, I've picked up things from Charles Wuorinen and Mario Davidovsky and Elliott Carter certainly, Milton Babbitt, Donald Martino. Sometimes they're almost very little things—the way a painter might paint an ear in just a certain way because Degas painted it that way. Or an apple, let's say, after you've seen some of Cezanne's apples. It's not that you are doing the same thing, but you are changed. Certainly the kind of inspired wackiness in Ligeti's music is something I've found stimulating and liberating. I've performed the music of every one of these composers—either on the flute or conducted. So it's like I'm a wire and these currents pass through me and leave some residue.

There are many composers who don't perform or who haven't performed, and "Vive la différence." In a way, if you don't have that direct performing influence, or if it's not something that's part of your everyday life, you might approach music in a different way and maybe develop certain strengths that a performer wouldn't develop; certainly composers vary.

There's quite a wide range between pieces of mine. Part of that is just the passage of time. The things I'm interested in now aren't the same things I was interested in 10 or 30 years ago.

And yet at the same time, granted the differences, I [still] sort of see my fingerprints in everything, [though] I don't know if anybody else does. It's not so much that I favor certain sonorities or certain kinds of transitions or something, it's almost more in what I would call the metabolism of the music. Metabolism as it refers to the life—the functioning of the organism. *Life Study* and *Angel and Stone* are very different pieces, though both are kind of sprawling and chaotic, and *Aurelian Echos* written maybe seven or eight years after those two, is almost neoclassical. Those are pretty different indeed.

CC: And yet it seems like the more a person plays your music, they do get a sense of the language and it becomes more familiar.

HS: Yes. I had a student…he did an article on me for the second edition of the *Grove Dictionary of Music*, and he pointed out that there was a lot of humor in my music, which I think is really the case. It's very hard for me to just write a piece that knits its brow all the time—usually there's some lighter element.

CC: It seems like you dedicate much of your music to specific people and have formed relationships with performers over the years. Is this something that is important to you?

HS: Yes…I was very lonely as a child for reasons that don't necessarily need to be gone into. I think a lot of artists probably spend quite a bit of time by themselves. For me, performing…being with musicians who shared the same kind of mania and passion and then specifically performing with people was a kind of discovery of community, and almost of family, in a way.

Certainly working in New York, there was just this great sense of we were all fighting this fight for serious music and new music. The community of people I interacted with there and performed with there was just one of the nicest that you

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SOLLBERGER (cont'd from previous page)

could encounter. It's kind of interesting because music can sometimes bring out competitive elements and negative things. But when I think of the really fine performers I knew, there was nothing but mutual regard and support. Probably a little like soldiers—you depend on each other in battle. Whatever your differences are, you have that bond that you have kind of put yourself on the line in doing some difficult and demanding things.

In that sense, I found a kind of communion that was much more than doing business. Thinking of someone like Pat Spencer…to work with her is to have the best [brought out] in you. I have memories not just of Pat but of so many people in New York. It's kind of interesting that the finest musicians are usually the ones who are the least competitive. It's not that they are arrogant, but just [that] they're too busy…applying themselves to the music to be worrying about other stuff.

So in that sense, a lot of what I've written has been something, I hope, that will challenge performers and reward them at the same time. It will stretch them and stretch their capabilities and be worth it. Because there's nothing more dispiriting than working awfully hard on a piece and then feeling there's not much there. So I'm hoping when people make a commitment they do experience, in the process or at the end, a sense of reward and something opening up to them…and the pleasure of being able to share that or pass it on to the audience.

To the Spirit, I should say, looks like a very serious piece, but I think of it more as a kind of what the French would call *jeu d'esprit* [a witty trifle]. It's not a gag piece by any means. There should be a sense of…inspired conversation like two multilingual people trying out all kinds of languages and punning and responding to passages back and forth…. ❑

Recordings: *CRI, New World, Nonesuch*
Scores: *Peters, ACA, or contact Harvey Sollberger at the University of California at San Diego.*

SPRATLAN (cont'd from page 1)

conscious way, it's just sort of fallen out that way. So, here's another animal, "Mayfly."

CC: Was it written for a specific group? It's an unusual ensemble—four flutes and soprano.
LS: Yes, it was a commission from the flutist Alex Ogle. He had the notion that it would be a multiple flutes piece, with each of the flute parts being played by a flutist from one of the so-called Five Colleges. Amherst College, where I teach, is part of a consortium that's made up of Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke, and Hampshire Colleges and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

I more or less on my own decided to do it as a quartet, and at first it was just going to be an instrumental piece. At some point I wanted something else. I thought at first about adding a cello part. Then Alex made the suggestion of a voice part, and he actually specified my wife Melinda Spratlan, who is a wonderful soprano and very devoted to new music—I've written many, many pieces for her. I kind of liked that idea. Having decided that, I then went on a poetry hunt and came up with Richard Wilbur. So that's how the whole thing evolved.

CC: How would you describe the piece compositionally?
LS: I'd say it's in a pretty advanced tonal language. For the most part, pretty highly chromatic and edgy, but with some very conspicuous exceptions. The piece is in four large movements, each one of them quite substantial, with three very brief movements sandwiched in among them. And those brief movements are like little tiny aphorisms—no more than a page each, and they are drawn from a subset of poems from the Richard Wilbur collection called *Three Tankas*. A tanka is a Japanese form—a little bit like a Haiku but with extra lines. The tankas are much more tonal, although I have to use that word carefully. Two of them are very heavily 5th-related, and one of them has a lot of 9ths in it. They're very static, and the language is a little bit separate.

There are a couple of other exceptions to mention. The third of the big pieces, "Personae," has two parts, "The Poet" and "Musicians." Both of these are almost postmodern pieces in that they are extremely referential. The first one is a kind of nostalgic look back on the Beat era—Jack Kerouac and so on. Tongue and cheek suggestion of the Beat poet with the beret and the scarf around his neck, Greenwich Village and all that. And that has a kind of sleazy samba quality to it. You can almost hear bongos in the background.

And then the other one, "The Musicians," is full of quotes. This being a flute piece, it's just loaded with things stolen from Bach flute music. It's really heavily collaged, in all sorts of different keys battling with one another. To counterbalance the Bach, the very end of it is the opening from "Thus Spake Zarathustra" for four flutes, [hums "Bo, bo, bo, bo-ba, thum, thum, thum, thum, thum, thum] including the timpani and everything done with tongue slaps. So it's a riot of quotes.

I think the three tankas and the two pieces from this larger piece which is called *Personae* are the general exception to the larger qualities I described as being advanced, quite non-tonal, highly chromatic.

CC: What kind of musical or nonmusical influences inspire your work?
LS: It's a very, very wide range. I've done a lot of vocal music, so individual poems are a source. My next piece after *Mayflies* [*Of Time and the Seasons*, written for Lucy Shelton] was drawn from an anthology of Finnish poems. I've been quite interested in Finland for a long time, for no reason I can particularly understand. It's a wonderfully odd sort of place. Tangos are a huge rage there, even in the furthest reaches of the frozen tundra [where people dance in] little huts with iron stoves. I'm especially interested in a lot of the younger Finnish composers, Magnus Lindberg and Saariaho.

Some of my music is fairly political. *In Memoriam* was written on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Colombian conquest. It has a lot of Mayan texts in it and also texts by Pablo Neruda, bemoaning the consequences of the genocide that occurred. It was premiered in the 1992–93 season at the time of the

Columbus orgy that was going on. And it was sort of another view of that whole situation.

CC: Other influences?
LS: [It's different for each piece.] Natural things are quite important to me. *When Crows Gather* is very much a wintertime piece. It's full of wintry images of one sort or another. In some cases quite overtly so, and in other cases quite privately. And then I have two operas.

CC: You won the Pulitzer for one of them, Life is a Dream.
LS: Yes, a couple of years ago. [And the Pulitzer was] its own kind of influence! *Life is a Dream* was drawn from a great 17th century Spanish play of the same title (*La Vida el Sueño*). What was attractive to me about it was the striking [modernity] of its sentiments—community, and the whole fuzziness between dreams and reality. Even though it was written hundreds of years ago it has an extremely timely kind of resonance to it. Besides, it's just fabulous drama; it was an opera waiting to be written.

CC: And the other?
LS: I just finished a commission from the San Francisco Opera for a chamber opera that's going to be premiered next year. A one act opera on a sci-fi topic, about a woman scientist at a biotech firm who is retiring and interviewing each of her three clones, looking for a successor.

CC: Who wrote the story?
LS: It's by a wonderful playwright by the name of Constance Congdon. I commissioned her to do the libretto for it. It involves issues of not only cloning but also bioengineering. The scientist meets a creature she made with genes from many other species spliced into him, in addition to the usual complement of human genes. She thought he was a lab experiment that had been aborted, but it turned out that he actually came to full term. He spends 20 years of his life looking for her and finally finds her.

CC: When will this be performed?
LS: In the spring of 2004, in San Francisco.

CC: Has the Pulitzer Prize changed you?
LS: Yes, [laughs] it sure has! I'm getting many, many more performances and commissions—it's been great.

The irony of it is that the thing I wanted most out of it hasn't happened: the opera that won the Pulitzer Prize has still not been staged. It won for just a concert performance and no company has picked it up yet. I've been peddling it like crazy. The New York City Opera did do a reading of the second act in its Showcasing American Opera series in May, and it was very well received and it was extremely well done. But again, it was just a concert performance. There are a lot of complicated reasons for that. Most opera companies, if they're going to put on a new work, like to be responsible for having commissioned or somehow brought it about, or having it fit into something thematic within their seasons, and so on.

CC: Opera is a business I guess.
LS: And it's a cutthroat business, too… which I have a certain amount of sympathy for. It's enormously expensive and people have got to cover their butts. But it's still a little disappointing.

CC: Have your experiences as a performer, teacher and conductor had any influence on what and how you compose?
LS: Very, very much so. I feel that my composition really is generated by performance. I'm very much a performer myself—I'm an oboist, or a sort of "hasbeen" oboist. Been playing forever, conducting forever, and I'm extremely deeply attuned to what it means to play a piece. Not just per instrument, but what it feels like sitting in an ensemble—the way instruments combine.

I'm very aware of what I ask players to do—both in terms of doing "normal things" and particular ways that I stretch them. I know what it means to stretch players, what it counts for. I'm very, very keen about the way instruments and voices combine.

On the conducting front again—having conducted enormous amounts of music— I have absorbed a lot of it from that point of view. What does it take to make this piece work? So that's very much on my mind when I'm composing.

From the teaching point of view, teaching forces you to understand music well, because you have to explain it to people. And you can't explain it well if you don't understand it well. That's one aspect of it. And then I've learned a lot from my students too. They can even be very elementary students, but sometimes a kid will come in and just stumble on something that he doesn't know enough not to do [laughs]. I've stolen a lot from my students that way.

CC: Teaching is supposed to be reciprocal.
LS: Yes, I definitely think it is.

CC: Who were your mentors?
LS: Well, my two main teachers, and actually, technically speaking, the only people I studied composition with, were Mel Powell and Gunther Schuller, both of them at Yale. Gunther taught at Yale only one year—it was the year before he was tapped to become the president of the New England Conservatory. I studied with him in my last year of graduate school. Before that, I worked with Mel Powell, who was really my most important teacher, I think.

But there have been many other important mentors whom I didn't [formally] study with. I took a number of courses with Yehudi Wyner, who was an important figure in my education. And Robert Bloom, the great oboist—he played under Toscanini in the NBC Symphony—was just phenomenal, an off-the-chart amazing musician. Of course I studied oboe with him, but I just learned so much more that…just the whole idea of building a phrase…very, very profound things which involved so much more than just playing the oboe. ❑

Scores: *www.lewisspratlan.com*
Rentals: *G. Schirmer, Shawnee Press*
Recordings: *Opus One, Gasparo, CRI (this year,* Vocalise with Duck*)*

An advocate of new music, ***Cathy Comrie*** *performs with Chicago Chamber Works and Catapult, a new music ensemble that she co-founded in 1995. She has had radio performances on both the Irish Radio Network and WFMT in Chicago, and has recorded works of John Eaton and Harvey Sollberger.*

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From the Editor

Greetings!

This month we have our by-now-traditional December celebration of contemporary composers and new music, "Highlights of the New." The program, organized by Patricia Spencer in a selection process she describes on p. 4, promises a New York premiere (Louis Spratlan's *Mayflies*) as well as authoritative interpretations of works specifically written for the players for who will be performing them. Cathy Comrie interviewed four of the composers: David Macbride, Harold Meltzer, Lewis Spratlan, and Harvey Sollberger. As you can see, they turned out to be a talkative and articulate bunch.

Learning about the literature and poetry underpinning these composers' compositions left me with the feeling that I might be overdue for some continuing education in the humanities. Readers similarly inspired can jump-start this process by turning to p. 2 of this newsletter, where Jayn Rosenfeld points us to favorite poems by Billy Collins, the current poet laureate of the United States.

December's Member Profile subject is Susan Deaver, a freelance flutist and conductor who studied with Harvey Sollberger in the early '70s.

Hope to see you at the concert.

Best regards,

Katherine Saenger
(klsaenger@yahoo.com)